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M E M O I R

OF THE

HONORABLE ABBOTT LAWRENCE,

PREPARED FOR THE

National Portrait Gallery,

BY

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT, ESQ.

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M E M O I R.

IN the following pages, we shall endeavor to present a sketch of the life and character of ABBOTT LAWRENCE, now that the grave has closed over him, and while his virtues are yet fresh in the memory of his countrymen.

The name of LAWRENCE is one of the earliest to be found among the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts. John Lawrence, the first emigrant of the name, was established in Watertown as early as 1635, and may have come over at the same time with Governor Winthrop. He afterwards removed, with his wife, to

Groton, where he lived to a good old age; leaving, at his death, a numerous family of sons and daughters. From one of the former was descended the subject of the present memoir. His father, Samuel Lawrence, was a soldier of the Revolution. On the breaking out of the war with the mother-country, he was among the first to bear arms; and was one of the little band of heroes who accompanied Colonel Prescott, and fought by his side at the battle of Bunker's Hill. His regiment was accordingly in the hottest of the action; being stationed at the redoubt, the principal point of attack. It had nearly proved a fatal day to the young soldier, who, besides a wound in the arm, had his hat pierced by a musket-ball, which grazed his temples, and carried off part of the hair. He remained in the army till 1778, filling the post of adjutant under General Sullivan at Rhode Island. He was a man of much firmness of character, of unblemished integrity, and of such frank and open manners as made him popular with his townsmen. He lived till 1827; long

enough to receive the best reward of a parent, in witnessing the complete success of his children.

His widow survived him eighteen years; and many may recall her venerable form, as seen by them during her occasional visits to her sons in Boston. As a mother, she had probably greater influence than her husband in forming their characters. She had strict notions of obedience, with deeply seated religious principles, which she succeeded in communicating to her children. "Her form," to quote the language of a descendant, "bending over the bed of her children in silent prayer, when she was about leaving them for the night, is still among the earliest of their recollections."

ABBOTT, the fifth son, was born in Groton, on the 16th of December, 1792. His education, begun at the district school, was completed at the Groton Academy, of which his father had been a trustee for more than thirty years; and which now, in grateful commemoration of the endowments it has received

from the members of that family, bears the name of the Lawrence Academy.

We have few accounts of Mr. LAWRENCE'S earlier days. In a passing notice of them in a letter of his brother Amos, written many years after, the writer says, "I well remember him as the guiding-spirit of the boys of our neighborhood in breaking through the deep snow-drifts which often blocked up the roads in winter." The fearlessness and buoyant disposition thus noticed in the boy were the characteristics of the man in later life.

In 1808, it was resolved to send him to Boston, and place him in the store of his elder brother, Mr. Amos Lawrence, who had been for some years established there in business as an importer of English goods. There could have been no better Mentor to watch over the warm-hearted and inexperienced youth, thus drawn from his village obscurity to be thrown upon the trials and temptations of the world. It is unnecessary to speak of the character of this brother,

now so widely known from a biography which may claim to be one of the most graceful tributes ever paid by filial piety to the memory of a parent.

ABBOTT was cordially welcomed by his brother, who from that hour watched over his steps in earlier days with a father's solicitude, and who followed his career in later life with feelings of pride and generous sympathy. "My brother came to me as my apprentice," says Mr. Amos Lawrence, in his Diary, "bringing his bundle under his arm, with less than three dollars in his pocket (and this was his fortune). A first-rate business lad he was; but, like other bright lads, needed the careful eye of a senior to guard him from the pitfalls he was exposed to." The following year, their brother William came to Boston also, to seek his fortune in the capital of New England. Their father, on this occasion, impressed on his three sons the importance of unity, quoting the pertinent language of Scripture, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken;" a precept which they religiously observed, living al-

ways together in that beautiful harmony which proved one great source of their prosperity.

After somewhat more than five years had elapsed, Mr. Amos Lawrence was so well satisfied with the sobriety and diligence of ABBOTT, and with his capacity for business, that he proposed to take him into partnership. He furnished the whole capital, amounting to fifty thousand dollars, — the fruits of his judicious management since his establishment in Boston. The times were by no means encouraging; for we were then in the midst of our war with England. But every thing seemed to prosper under the prudent direction of Mr. Lawrence. Scarcely, however, had the articles of copartnership been signed, than the Bramble news created a panic that fearfully affected the prices of goods. The stock of the firm depreciated to such an extent, that ABBOTT looked on himself as already a bankrupt. His brother, touched with his distress, offered at once to cancel the copartnership indentures, and to pay him, moreover, five thousand

dollars at the end of the year. But ABBOTT had a spirit equal to his own, and told his brother that he had taken part with him for better or worse, and that, come what might, he would not swerve from the contract. The generosity and manly spirit shown by the two brothers on this occasion gave augury of the complete success which crowned their operations in after-life. But success was still deferred, as things wore a gloomy aspect during the war.

Most of the younger men of the city at this time were enrolled in the militia, which was constantly on duty, and liable at any moment to be called into active service. Mr. ABBOTT LAWRENCE had joined the independent company of the New-England Guards; a corps remarked for its excellent appointments, and commanded by men more than one of whom afterwards rose to eminence, — not, however, in the military profession, but in the law. He was one of the few of the company he had joined who remained long enough on duty to entitle them to the bounty of land in the

West offered by the general government. The soldier's life had something in it captivating to the imagination of an ardent, high-spirited youth ; and the profession of arms, in the present condition of the country, offered a more splendid career for enterprise than was to be found in commercial pursuits. With his brother's consent, he proposed to enter the service, and applied to the War Department at Washington to obtain a commission. Happily, before receiving an answer, the news of peace arrived, and all thoughts of a military life were abandoned. Mr. LAWRENCE used to regard this almost in the light of a providential interposition in his behalf. It was, indeed, the crisis of his fate. The long peace which followed condemned the soldier to an inactivity that left him no laurels to win ; except, indeed, such as might be gathered from a skirmish with the savages, or from the patient endurance of privations on some distant frontier post. Mr. LAWRENCE was reserved for a happier destiny.

On the return of peace, the two brothers saw at

once the new field that was opened for foreign importations; and the younger partner, commissioned to purchase goods at Manchester, embarked in the "Milo,"—the first vessel that, after the proclamation of the peace, left Boston for England. The passage was a short one, but long enough for Mr. LAWRENCE to ingratiate himself not only with the officers, but with the crew, whose good-will he secured, as one of their number lately informed the writer of this notice, by his liberal acts no less than by the kindness of his manners. With characteristic ardor, he was the first to leap on shore; being thus, perhaps, the first American who touched his fatherland after the war was ended. He met with a cordial welcome from people who were glad to see their commercial relations restored with the United States. Hastening to Manchester, Mr. LAWRENCE speedily made his purchases, and returned to Liverpool the evening only before the departure of the "Milo" on her homeward voyage. He at once engaged a lighter to take him and his merchandise to the vessel.

When he came alongside, the mate plainly told him there was no room for his goods; the cargo was all on board, and the hatches were battened down. But Mr. LAWRENCE would receive no denial. This, he said, was his first voyage, and the result was of the greatest importance to him. He pressed his suit with so much earnestness, yet good-nature, that the mate, whose good-will he had won on the passage, consented at last to receive the goods. Mr. LAWRENCE lost no time in profiting by this indulgence, and joined his men in pulling vigorously at the tackle, to hoist the bales on board. Having safely lodged them on the deck, he made at once for the shore, asking no questions how they were to be stored. The "Milo" had a short passage back. In eighty-four days from the time when she had left her port in the United States, the goods were landed in Boston, and, in less than a week, were disposed of at an enormous profit. His brother was delighted with the good judgment he had shown and his extraordinary despatch. "You are as famous," he

pleasantly wrote to him, "among your acquaintances here, for the rapidity of your movements, as Bonaparte."

This little anecdote is eminently characteristic of the man, showing, as it does, the sanguine temper and energy of will, which, combined with kindness of heart, gained him an influence over others, and formed the elements of his future success.

He remained some time longer in England, extending his acquaintance with men of business, but still living as an unknown individual in the midst of the scenes which he was afterwards to revisit clothed with an authority that placed him on a level with the proudest nobles of the land.

Several times he repeated his voyage to England, and always with the same good results. Under the judicious management and enterprise of the house, its business became every day more widely extended; and the fortunes of the brothers rapidly increased.

In June, 1819, an important event took place in Mr. ABBOTT LAWRENCE'S life. This was his marriage with Miss Katharine Bigelow, the eldest daughter of the Hon. Timothy Bigelow, an eminent lawyer, who filled for many years the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts. He was a man of high legal attainments, and singularly fitted for his political station by his ready apprehension, his tenacious memory, and his familiarity with business. Mr. Lawrence's acquaintance with his wife had begun in childhood; for she was a native of Groton, like himself; though, long before this period, her father had transferred his residence to Medford, in the neighborhood of Boston. It was a most happy union, continuing for more than thirty-five years, until it was dissolved by death. In the partner of his choice, he found the qualities of a true and loving wife, ever ready to share with him all his joys and sorrows; for the lot of the most fortunate has its sorrows, and sharp ones. These feelings he on his part returned, from first to last, with

the warmth and single-hearted devotion which belonged to his noble nature.

During the last five years, an important change had gradually taken place in the internal relations of the country, owing to the system of domestic protection which now began to be recognized as a leading feature in the policy of the government. The sagacious minds of the Lawrences were quick to perceive the influence this must exert on the channels of trade, and the important bearing it must have, in particular, on the people of New England, whose industry and ingenuity so well fitted them for proficiency in the mechanical arts. They leaned, too, with greater confidence than was justified by the event, on the stability of the protective policy. The encouragement was especially felt in the cotton and woollen manufactures, then almost exclusively confined to New England. With characteristic energy, the brothers accordingly resolved to give up their business as importers, and employ their capital henceforth in domes-

tic manufactures. Associating their names with those of the Lowells, the Jacksons, the Appletons, and other sagacious men of the same way of thinking with themselves, they devoted all their energies to foster this great branch of the national industry. Under these auspices, towns and villages grew up along the borders of the Merrimac and its numerous tributaries; and the spots which had once been little better than barren wastes of sand, where the silence was broken only by the moaning of the wind through the melancholy pines, became speedily alive with the cheerful hum of labor.

Mr. LAWRENCE had too large a mind to embark in this new enterprise with the feelings of a sordid speculator intent only on selfish gains. He took a more expansive view, founded on just principles of political economy. He saw the resources which this new field of domestic industry would open to the country; the new markets it would afford to the products of the farmer; the independence it would give the nation of

foreign countries, on which it had hitherto relied for those fabrics which were the necessaries of life; the employment it would give to thousands of operatives in the North, who would find here a field for talents hitherto unknown to themselves; and the benefits it would confer on the planters of the South, in raising, by means of competition, the prices of the raw material they had to sell. These views he exhibited in his private correspondence and his public addresses. He unfolded them more at large in a well-known series of printed letters addressed to the Hon. William C. Rives, of Virginia, which appeared in 1846. In these he discusses the subject of a tariff on the broadest grounds, enforcing his arguments, according to his wont, by an array of statistical facts, some of them exceedingly striking. Instead of limiting their application to his own part of the country, he particularly directs it to Virginia, the impoverished condition of whose soil seemed to call for some extraordinary action to restore the ancient prosperity of

the State. Above all, he insists on the necessity of the education of the poorer classes, as the only true basis, whether in a moral or physical point of view, of the public prosperity. On this last theme he was always eloquent, urging it in his public addresses, abroad as well as at home, and with an effect which, as we shall see hereafter, was acknowledged, by those who witnessed it, to have been attended with the happiest results.

In 1827 was held the Harrisburg Convention, — a meeting, it is hardly necessary to say, of delegates from different parts of the Union, for the purpose of taking into consideration the best measures for protecting the manufacturing interests of the country. MR. LAWRENCE, whose attention to the subject and the soundness of whose views upon it were well known, was one of the seven delegates sent by Massachusetts. The large amount of practical information which he brought with him proved of infinite service in the deliberations that followed ; and there was probably

no one of the body who was more instrumental in procuring its sanction to the memorial which was laid before Congress, and which had so great an influence in determining the action of the government in respect to the tariff of 1828.

Notwithstanding the interest he took in public affairs, and the capacity which he showed for the management of them, Mr. LAWRENCE had evinced no desire to enter on the political arena, or to hold office of any kind. In 1831, he was elected to the Common Council of Boston, but, at the end of his term, declined a re-election. Nor did he from that time ever accept any place, either under the city government or that of the State. In 1834, however, he consented to stand as a candidate for a seat in the House of Representatives at Washington.

On taking his place in that body, he was at once put on the Committee of Ways and Means; showing that his reputation for financial talent had already preceded him. During the two years that he sat on

the floor of that house, he rarely attempted any thing like a set and elaborate speech. When he did speak, it was on topics with which he was familiar; and his wise and practical views, which he enforced by arguments not local or sectional in their nature, but embracing the interests of the whole country, commanded the deepest attention of his audience. His frank and cordial address, flowing less from conventional courtesy than from the natural kindness of his heart, conciliated his hearers; and that "inestimable temper" which Gibbon commends so highly in the British minister, Lord North, disarmed the severity of his opponents, and served, like oil upon the waters, to calm the angry passions of debate. The same qualities gave Mr. LAWRENCE, out of the walls of Congress, an influence which proved of the highest service to the cause in which he was embarked. When he returned home, at the expiration of his term, there was probably no member of the body with which he had acted who possessed a larger measure of their confidence, or who was so universally popular.

His constituents testified their sense of his services by inviting him, on his return, to a public dinner. This he declined in a letter, in which he touches, briefly but comprehensively, on the great questions that agitated the public mind at that day, showing himself throughout a stanch but liberal-minded Whig. Notwithstanding the importunities of his friends, he declined a re-election to Congress; nor could he be induced to alter his purpose by the remarkable assurance given to him by the members of the opposite party, that, if he would consent to stand, no candidate should be brought out against him.

Four years later, however, he consented to accept a second nomination, and again took his seat in the House of Representatives at Washington. It was a disastrous session to him; for, shortly after his arrival, he was attacked by typhus fever, of so malignant a type, that, for some time, small hopes were entertained of his recovery. But he had good advice; and his fine constitution, and the care of his devoted wife, enabled

him, by the blessing of Providence, to get the better of his disorder. It left behind, however, the seeds of another malady, in an enlargement of the liver, which caused him much suffering in after-life, and finally brought him to the grave.

Finding a southern climate unfavorable to his health, he resigned his seat in Congress, and returned to Boston, where he at once resumed his usual avocations. He was not long permitted to indulge in a state of political inaction. In 1842, the convention was held for the settlement of the North-eastern boundary, — that vexed question, which, after baffling all attempts at an adjustment, including those by means of royal arbitration, had at length assumed a form which menaced an open rupture between the United States and England. Mr. LAWRENCE was one of the commissioners who, at the wise suggestion of Mr. Webster, were sent by the States of Maine and Massachusetts, to Washington, with full powers to arrange the matter definitively with Lord Ashburton, who had come out invested with

similar powers on behalf of his own country. No man in our community could have been better fitted for the place than Mr. LAWRENCE; for he had a good knowledge of the subject, was well acquainted with the characters of the parties who were to discuss it, and possessed, in a remarkable degree, the qualities for success as a negotiator. "Mr. LAWRENCE," said a distinguished foreign minister, who had personal knowledge of his abilities in this way, "had so much frankness and cordiality in his address, and impressed one so entirely with his own uprightness, that he could do much in the way of negotiation that others could not." There was an ample field for the exercise of these powers on the present occasion, when prejudices of long standing were to be encountered, when pretensions of the most opposite kind were to be reconciled, when the pertinacity with which these pretensions had been maintained had infused something like a spirit of acrimony into the breasts of the disputants. Yet no acrimony could stand long against the genial temper of Mr. LAWRENCE,

or against that spirit of candor and reasonable concession which called forth a reciprocity of sentiment in those he had to deal with. The influence which he thus exerted over his colleagues contributed in no slight degree to a concert of action between them. Indeed, without derogating from the merits of the other delegates, it is not too much to say, that, but for the influence exerted by Mr. LAWRENCE on this occasion, the treaty, if it had been arranged at all, would never have been brought into the shape which it now wears.

In the summer of the following year, Mr. LAWRENCE, whose health still felt the effects of his illness at Washington, proposed to recruit it by a voyage to England. He embarked with his family on board the "Columbia," — the ill-fated steamer which was wrecked on Black Ledge, near Seal Island, in Nova Scotia. All on board were fortunate enough to escape to land. Five days they remained on that dreary spot, exposed to wet, hunger, and miseries of every description.

None of that forlorn company will ever forget the disinterested kindness shown by Mr. LAWRENCE, and his courageous and cheerful spirit, which infused life into the most desponding. They were at length transported to Halifax, whence he proceeded on his voyage. In England, he met with a hearty welcome from some who had shared his hospitality in the United States, and many more who knew him only by reputation, but who became his fast friends in after-life.

On his return home, he resumed his business, which pressed on him the more heavily as it became more widely extended. During his leisure, he was not so much engrossed by politics as not to give attention to a subject which he always had much at heart, — the cause of education. Among his many charities, which seemed to be as necessary to satisfy the wants of his own nature as those of the subjects of them, we find him constantly giving away money to assist in educating poor young men of merit. He gave two thousand dollars for prizes to the pupils of the Boston Latin and

High Schools. He now contemplated a donation, on a much larger scale, to Harvard University. He was satisfied, that, however liberal the endowments of that institution for objects of literary culture, no adequate provision had been made for instruction in science, more particularly in its application to the useful arts, — a deficiency which naturally came more readily within the reach of his own observation. In a remarkable letter addressed by him to Mr. Eliot, the treasurer of the college, in June, 1847, he explains, with great beauty and propriety of language, his views on the subject, and, with no less precision, points out the best mode of carrying them into effect. He concludes by offering the sum of fifty thousand dollars for the endowment of such a scientific school as he had proposed. This sum he afterwards doubled by a provision to that effect in his will; thus making the whole donation a hundred thousand dollars. Large as was this sum, its value was greatly enhanced by the wise arrangements made for its application. His sugges-

tions met with the approval of the corporation. He had the satisfaction of seeing a building erected and an institution organized on the principles he had recommended. Fortunately, the services were obtained, at the outset, of an illustrious scholar, who, by the consent of Europe, stood at the head of his department of science, and whose salary of fifteen hundred dollars per annum was wholly defrayed by Mr. LAWRENCE, in addition to his other donations, so long as he lived. A letter addressed to him by a distinguished professor of the school gave him the sweet assurance, in his last illness, of the extraordinary proficiency of the pupils, — in other words, of the complete success of his benevolent enterprise; and he might well be cheered by the reflection that the Lawrence Scientific School would perpetuate his name to future generations, who would cherish with gratitude the memory of their benefactor.

Mr. LAWRENCE was a member of the convention which nominated Mr. Clay for the Presidency. The

interest he felt in public affairs led him to take an active part in promoting the success of the Whig candidate, as he had before shown equal zeal in the canvass for Gen. Harrison, though — as the country has good reason to remember — with very different results. In 1847, Gen. Taylor was nominated as the Whig candidate for President, and Mr. Fillmore for Vice-President. The history of the convention which made these nominations is too familiar to be recapitulated here. It is enough to say that Mr. LAWRENCE had received assurances, down to the very eve of the election, which gave him every reason to suppose that he was to be named for the latter office. Whatever may have been his disappointment, he did not betray it by a word. “Well, I am perfectly satisfied,” was the answer he made to the friend who was appointed to inform him of the result; and, instead of looking for pretexts, as many, not to say most, men would have done, for withdrawing from the canvass, or at least for looking coldly upon it, he was among the first to join

in a call for a meeting of the Whigs in Faneuil Hall, and to address them, in the warmest manner, in support of the regular ticket. In the same magnanimous and patriotic spirit, he visited the principal towns in the State, delivering addresses and using all his efforts to secure the triumph of the good cause.

On the election of Gen. Taylor to the chief magistracy of the country, the confidence he reposed in Mr. LAWRENCE, and the prominent position occupied by the latter in the party, recommended him at once to a seat in the cabinet. The place of Secretary of the Navy was accordingly offered to him, and afterwards that of Secretary of the Interior. Both offices were declined by him; and when, soon after, he was nominated by the President to take the highest diplomatic post in the gift of the government, — the mission to England, — he declined that also. The large and important interests of which he had the charge made him see only the difficulties of such a step. The place, moreover, had been filled by distinguished statesmen,

two of the most recent of whom stood pre-eminent in the literature of the country; and Mr. LAWRENCE seems to have exaggerated the qualifications required for the post, or, at any rate, to have distrusted his own. From these various considerations, he had made up his mind to decline the offer when pressed upon him a second time by Gen. Taylor, and announced his decision to his friends. But some of them, taking a very different, and, as it proved, a more correct, view of the affair, persuaded him to review, and subsequently to reverse, his decision. In the month of September, 1849, he accordingly embarked, with his wife and a part of his family, for England.

Mr. LAWRENCE'S mission to the court of St. James was the most brilliant part of his political career, and fully justified the sagacity of those who advised him to undertake it. Taking all circumstances into consideration, few men could have been so well fitted for the place. If he had not the profound scholarship of his immediate predecessors, he had, what was of great

moment, a large practical acquaintance with affairs; a thorough knowledge of the resources of his own country, and of the country to which he was accredited; a talent quite remarkable, as we have seen, for negotiation; a genial temper, well suited to thaw out the chilling reserve of manner too apt to gather round the really warm heart of the Englishman; a generous spirit of hospitality, with a fortune to support it, enabling him to collect round him persons of most eminence in the society of the capital, and to bring them in contact with similar classes of his own countrymen; thus happily affording opportunity for allaying ancient prejudices, and fostering mutual sentiments of respect and good-will.

A similar influence was exerted by the public addresses which, from time to time, he was called on to make in different parts of the kingdom, at meetings held to promote the great interests of agriculture, of manufactures, or of educational reform. Coming from a land where the people had made such progress in the

various departments of labor and mechanical skill, and from a part of the country where popular education had made most progress, he was naturally listened to with much attention. The paramount importance of education for the masses was the theme he constantly pressed home upon his hearers. Thus, at Manchester, we find him drawing a comparison between the laboring classes in England and the United States in respect to education, and plainly telling his audience, that, "if England hoped to keep her place in the van of civilization, it must be by educating the humblest of her classes up to the highest point of other nations." "The able as well as delicate manner," says an eminent British journal, "in which Mr. LAWRENCE handled this subject, made a deep impression on his auditory; and it had probably no inconsiderable influence in stimulating that highly creditable educational movement of which Manchester has since been the scene, and in which it has stood out in strong contrast to the other great towns of the empire."

We find him speaking to the same purpose, in a striking passage often quoted from the speech made by him at Mr. Peabody's dinner, at the close of the Great Exhibition in London. A broader field for these popular addresses was offered by a visit which he made to Ireland in the autumn of 1852. The welcome he received from the generous-hearted people was altogether extraordinary. His reputation had prepared the way for it; and all were eager to see the representative of a land to which their own countrymen were flocking as to a place of refuge from the troubles of the Old World. Well might the "Times" say that "the American Minister found himself received with almost the honors of royalty; that railway directors gave him special trains, banquets, and addresses; and every city prepared an ovation."

In the midst of this festal progress, Mr. LAWRENCE was closely observing the condition of the country and its inhabitants, and drawing materials for an elaborate report of it to the Department of State. The despatch

is of much length, embodying his views on the great questions of interest touching the state of that unhappy country, the policy of the English government towards it, and its probable future; the whole accompanied by a mass of statistical information, which his position gave him obvious advantages for collecting. This valuable report forms one of numerous despatches of a similar nature which occupied what was regarded as the American minister's leisure time during his diplomatic residence. Many of the papers are of great length, and must have been prepared with much care. Some few have been printed by order of Congress. The rest are to be found on the files of the Department of State at Washington. One has only to specify the titles of some of these to show the variety of the topics to which they relate. Thus, we find one containing curious estimates on the comparative cost of building and manning merchant ships in England and the United States; another on the guard-ships for the suppression of the slave-trade; another on the commerce

carried on with Africa; two or three on the postal relations of the country, with reference to a reduction of the rate of ocean-postage; another, the result of much consideration, on the currency of both England and our own country. Besides these communications on particular topics, we find others, of a more general nature, containing a survey of the actual condition of England, supported by abundant statistical detail; with ample discussion on its course of trade, on the character of parties, and the policy of the government. The opportunities of personal observation enjoyed by Mr. LAWRENCE abroad served, it may be remarked, to strengthen the opinions he had expressed at home of the necessity of a protective policy by our own government, if we would contend successfully against the cheaper labor of Europe. In this survey of the national character and resources, the despatches of Mr. LAWRENCE remind one of the reports — *relazioni*, as they are called — which were made, by order of their government, by the Venetian ambassadors, and which, after

being read, on their return, before the Senate, were deposited in the public archives, where they furnish some of the most authentic materials for the historian.

Among the despatches are two particularly worthy of consideration, as relating to negotiations that opened the way to important treaties. The first of these relates to the fisheries. No sooner had Mr. LAWRENCE become acquainted with the course pursued by the English government in sending out a fleet of armed vessels to assert its maritime rights on the coast of Nova Scotia, than, without waiting for instructions, he at once opened the matter to Lord Malmesbury, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, and urged the mischievous consequences likely to result from an action so precipitate and so menacing in its nature. His remonstrances were of sufficient weight to influence the instructions afterwards issued by the government; and Mr. LAWRENCE'S negotiations, which received the approval of the President, placed affairs on the quiet basis on which they continued till a treaty was definitively

settled. When we reflect on the irritation that would have been produced in this country if the ill-considered measure of the English government had been fully carried out, we cannot doubt that the timely and temperate remonstrance of the American minister did much to save his country from a rupture with Great Britain.

The other affair concerned Central America, — that uneasy question, which, after having been formally disposed of by treaty, has again risen, like a troubled spirit, to disturb the quiet of the world. The American envoy, in obedience to instructions from Washington, brought the subject before Lord Palmerston as early as November, 1849. He obtained from that minister an assurance that Great Britain had no design to occupy or colonize any part of Central America, and that she would willingly enter into a guarantee with the United States for the neutrality of the proposed canal across the Isthmus. But Mr. LAWRENCE was quick to perceive that these assurances would fail to answer the

purpose, unless Great Britain would consent to abandon her shadowy protectorate over the Mosquito Indians. He accordingly made this the subject of a particular representation in more than one interview with the English minister; and he further urged the abandonment of the protectorate on the strongest grounds of policy, in a long and able communication to Lord Palmerston, dated December 14, 1849. To this letter he received no reply; and early in the following year, it being thought there were greater facilities for conducting the negotiation in this country than in England, it was removed, for a final adjustment of the affair, to Washington.

Meanwhile Mr. LAWRENCE had been diligently preparing a communication for his own government, — since printed by order of the Senate, — the object of which was to trace to its origin the British claim to the exercise of a protectorate over the Mosquito territory. In doing this, he travelled over a vast field of historical research, showing the first occupation of the

territory by the Spaniards, its subsequent invasion by the English, and establishing, to the conviction of every unprejudiced mind, that Great Britain never did possess any legal right to the qualified dominion which she claimed as protector of the Indians; and that, if she had possessed it, this would signify nothing, since, by an express treaty with Spain, she had formally renounced such right. By a singular coincidence, this remarkable state-paper is dated on the 19th of April, 1850, being precisely the same date with that of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty.

This latter instrument, confining itself to the simple object of a guarantee for a canal across the Isthmus, makes no provision for the Mosquito question, though by an incidental allusion it appears to recognize the existence of a protectorate. Indeed, it seems to have done nothing more than carry out the details of the arrangement to which Lord Palmerston professed his readiness to accede in his first communication to Mr. LAWRENCE. But, as the latter wisely foresaw, so impor-

tant an element in the discussion as the Mosquito protectorate could not be winked out of sight; and, as it now appears, the absence of so material a link in the chain of negotiations has made the other provisions of the treaty of little worth.

The pressing nature of Mr. LAWRENCE'S private affairs made him at length, after an absence of three years, desirous of returning home. Indeed, he could not have postponed his return so long, but for the faithful and able manner in which his eldest son, to whom he had committed the charge of his property, had executed that trust; thus relieving his father, as the latter often remarked, of all anxiety in regard to his own affairs, and enabling him to give undivided attention to those of the public. Having obtained the President's consent, Mr. LAWRENCE resigned his place as envoy from the United States on the first of October, 1852, and bade adieu to those shores where he had landed almost a stranger, but where he now left a host of friends; where the kindness of his heart, the charm

of his manners, and his elegant hospitality, had made his mission as acceptable to the English as the able and conscientious manner in which it was conducted rendered it honorable to himself and his country.

The citizens of Boston had made preparations for giving him such a brilliant reception on landing as might show their sense of his services. Unhappily, the time of his return was also that of the death of Mr. Webster. Mr. LAWRENCE proceeded to Marshfield the day after his arrival; and his first meeting with many of his friends and townsmen was at the celebration of the funeral obsequies of the great statesman. When a decent time had elapsed, his friends resumed their purpose of a complimentary dinner. But Mr. LAWRENCE, with much delicacy, declined their invitation, saying that "he should seem wanting in respect for the dead, as well as consideration for the living, were he to accept a festive entertainment at such a season of mourning."

He now resumed his former way of life, and was to be found at the regular hours at his accustomed place

of business. The complexion of the times was most unfavorable to both the cotton and woollen manufactures. Great advances were required to be made for the completion of works in which Mr. LAWRENCE was largely interested. It was difficult to obtain such advances in the depressed state of the stocks. With his usual spirit, Mr. LAWRENCE came forward to the rescue, and not only bore his own share of the subscription, but took stock to the amount of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars more; though, in doing so, he sacrificed half that amount, the stock having fallen fifty per cent in the market.

But Mr. LAWRENCE, though he gave a general supervision to his affairs, left the conduct of them to his younger partners, whose experience well qualified them for the task. He did not possess, indeed, the same strength of constitution and physical energy that he once had. Perhaps for that reason, though he still maintained a warm interest in public affairs, with the exception of his efforts in the canvass for General

Scott as President, he took no active part in politics. He still showed the same zeal as ever in the cause of education, and watched with the deepest interest over the rising fortunes of the Scientific School which he had founded at Cambridge. His labors in behalf of learning were fully appreciated by his countrymen; one proof of which is afforded by the literary honors bestowed on him by the principal academies and colleges throughout the State.

Thus loved and respected by the community in which he lived, with a fortune that enabled him to gratify his munificent disposition, and a heart fitted by nature for the pleasures of friendship, and, above all, for the sweet intercourse of home, Mr. LAWRENCE might reasonably promise himself that serene enjoyment for the evening of his days which should wait upon the close of a well-spent life. Alas! no such happiness was in store for him.

In September, 1854, he was visited by a return of the malady the seeds of which had lingered in his



constitution ever since his illness at Washington. A second attack, a few weeks later, while passing some days on his family estate amidst the beautiful scenery of Groton, left him in a precarious state of health, from which he did not entirely rally till the winter was far advanced. Even then, although he recovered the natural buoyancy of his spirits and again mingled in society, the indications of suffering in his countenance, and the loss of his accustomed vigor, were just causes of apprehension to his friends. His physician advised change of climate, and recommended to him a voyage to England, associated as it was in his mind with so many pleasant recollections. Early in June, 1855, he accordingly secured a passage for himself and Mrs. Lawrence in one of the British steamers; but, two days after, his malady returned, accompanied with such intense pain that he took to his bed, — from which he was never more to rise.

It would be painful to follow him through the long and wearisome summer, during which he was sensibly

losing ground day after day, yet with occasional intervals of ease that seemed to give promise that the disease was arrested. No one will forget the extraordinary interest shown on that occasion by all classes, and the eagerness with which they endeavored to draw from the physicians some encouragement for their hopes. A more remarkable proof of the hold he had upon the community was the daily announcement of the state of his health in the public journals,—a tribute the more touching that he held no official position to call it forth. It was the homage of the heart.

During the long period of his confinement, his sufferings served only to show the sweetness of his disposition. The circumstances which filled those around him with wretchedness and with apprehensions they could ill disguise had no power to disturb his serenity. He loved life. No man had greater reason to love it; for he had all that makes life valuable. But, as his hold loosened upon it, no mur-

mur, no sigh of regret, escaped his lips; while he bowed in perfect submission to the will of that Almighty Father who had ever dealt with him so kindly. As his strength of body diminished, that of his affections seemed to increase. He appeared to be constantly occupied with thoughts of others rather than of himself; and many a touching instance did he give of this thoughtfulness, and of his tender recollection of those who were dear to him. The desire of doing good, on the broadest scale, clung to him to the last. Not two weeks before his death, he was occupied with arranging the plan of the model-houses for the poor, for which he made so noble a provision in his will. His last hours were cheered by the assurance, as we have elsewhere noticed, that his wise and generous provisions for promoting a more scientific culture at Cambridge were crowned with entire success. He was dying with every thing around him to soften the bitterness of death; above all, with the sweet consciousness that he had not lived in vain. On the

18th of August, 1855, a few months before he had completed his sixty-third year, he expired, and that so gently, that those around could not be sure of the precise moment when his spirit took its flight.

The tidings of Mr. LAWRENCE'S death, though not unexpected, fell like some startling calamity on the ears of the community. A meeting of the citizens was at once called to express their sense of this great public bereavement. It assembled in Faneuil Hall, — that hall where the manly tones of his own voice had been so often raised in maintenance of the right, but which now echoed only to the sounds of lamentation, as more than one gifted orator poured forth an eloquent and touching tribute to the virtues of the deceased.

The sympathies of the community were called forth still more strongly on the day of the funeral, when the sad countenances and moistened eyes of the vast multitude that attended the services showed how truly they felt the death of Mr. LAWRENCE, not merely as a great public calamity, but as something personal to

themselves. Every honor that could be paid to his memory was eagerly rendered by the authorities of the city on this occasion. The day was celebrated as a day of public mourning. The bells tolled in the principal churches. The flags of the shipping were at half-mast. Minute-guns were fired. The places of business were closed in many parts of the town, and all along the road which conducted to the cemetery of Mount Auburn. As the spectator gazed on the long company of mourners taking their way through files of the soldiery, who lined the streets as far as the bridge which unites Boston to Cambridge, he might well have called to mind the time when the object of all this homage first came to town, over this same avenue, a poor country-lad, with only a few dollars in his pocket, and but one friend in that strange capital to welcome him. That friend was his brother, Amos Lawrence, who, only three years since, had been borne to Mount Auburn, amidst the tears and regrets of the whole community. Still another brother — William,

of whom mention has been made in an early part of this memoir—had preceded them both on the same dark journey. Like them, he had come to Boston to seek his fortune, which, when gained, he employed, like them, in acts of beneficence and mercy. The “threefold cord” to which their father had so wisely alluded was indeed broken; but it was by the hand of Death. And in that beautiful cemetery, where are gathered the ashes of so many of the good and the great, the three brothers, who loved one another through life so well, now sleep side by side, and rest in peace from their labors.

A notice of Mr. LAWRENCE would not be complete without some mention of the legacies left by him for charitable purposes, so much in harmony with the general course of his life. Besides doubling the amount given in his lifetime to the Scientific School, he bequeathed the sum of fifty thousand dollars for the erection of model lodging-houses for the poor, providing with great minuteness and discretion such

regulations as would accomplish the object he had in view. In addition to these munificent bequests, he left ten thousand dollars to the Public Library of the city of Boston, and smaller legacies to different institutions; making the whole amount of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars devised for public objects. These were the last acts of a life of benevolence.

Such are the outlines of the history of a Boston merchant, — of one who, by the energy of his character and the winning frankness of his manners, acquired a remarkable ascendancy over all with whom he came in contact; who supplied the deficiencies of early education by an assiduous diligence, that made him eminent in after-life both as a public speaker and a political writer; whose conduct was controlled by settled religious principles, that made him proof alike against the intrigues of party and the blandishments of a court; who regarded every subject with those large and enlightened views which gave dignity to his profession, and raised him to high consideration as a diploma-

tist and a statesman ; who, blessed by nature with a sunny temper and a truly loving heart, was the delight of his friends, and an object of little less than idolatry to his own family ; and who, holding the large property he had acquired by his own efforts as a trust for the good of his fellow-men, dispensed it in those noble charities which have gained him a high place among the benefactors of mankind.

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